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Chairperson: Mr. Mićić (Vice-Chairperson) ..... (Serbia)
later: Mr. García González (Vice-Chairperson) ..... (El Salvador)

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In the absence of Mr. Park In-kook (Republic of Korea), Mr. Mićić (Serbia), Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 57: Eradication of poverty and other development issues (*continued*)

(a) Implementation of the Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008-2017) (*continued*)

(b) Women in development (*continued*) (A/64/93, A/64/162 and A/64/162/Corr.1)

1. **Mr. Valero Briceño** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that it was vital to develop laws and inclusive and holistic policies to eradicate poverty. Access to justice and fair employment were essential but creating a fair and equitable global society also required a movement away from the current capitalist system, which only perpetuated poverty.

2. He reviewed the structural and historical reasons for poverty in countries in the South, noting that those countries had been made dependent on the global capitalist system, while subject to violence and the destruction of major advances; they had been made net exporters of capital to countries in the North, while they became poorer. While the welfare State was developed in Europe, developing countries only experienced despair and deterioration of educational services, health care, housing, water supply and social security. Indiscriminate trade liberalization, the destruction of local production and the war against environmentally sustainable farming and traditional crop production had destroyed any hope of their overcoming underdevelopment and eradicating poverty.

3. The new challenges of climate change and the economic crisis had worsened the living conditions of the poor in particular, and the resources that the dominant financial system provided to developing countries were insufficient and imposed conditionalities which violated State sovereignty. While legal empowerment of the poor was important in the eradication of poverty, it must be extended to all areas of life.

4. The Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela had a social equity plan to universalize human rights, eradicate poverty and overcome inequalities. National oil resources now served the people and the distribution of revenue had been improved through a strengthened social economy, democratization of property and generation of gainful employment and an increase in workers' real wages. Government programmes had made it possible for his country to achieve the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of reducing extreme poverty, and all the other MDGs, placing his country in the vanguard of the fight to overcome poverty and inequality in Latin America and the Caribbean.

5. **Mr. Almambetov** (Kazakhstan) said that greater efforts were needed to mitigate the consequences of the global financial and economic crisis. Each MDG task and indicator must be revised and adapted to the social and economic realities of each country and new and innovative policies must be developed. A more objective assessment of MDG implementation in rural areas was also needed.

6. Kazakhstan, for its part, had achieved several MDGs, including the goal of poverty reduction, and was taking measures to ensure progress on the MDG-Plus agenda, improving the quality of life for all citizens and mainstreaming environmental sustainability and a socially oriented development policy in its national, sectoral and local strategies. His Government was taking measures to stabilize the economic environment, including through stimulus plans for human capital development and employment, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises in rural areas. It had adopted a socio-economic approach to creating jobs, improving access to quality education and health-care services, and boosting direct social aid to marginalized groups. The most marginalized among them, including the elderly, the disabled and large low-income families, benefited from a mixed system of social protection, through an accrued pension system and social insurance. The Government had also doubled its efforts to support women and children, soliciting donor funds and cost-sharing from development partners, introducing benefits and compulsory social insurance in 2008 to assist women during pregnancy and childbirth, and providing care for children under 1 year of age. Moreover, the revised 2009-2011 national budget enhanced social benefits and guarantees to the general population.

7. Kazakhstan would work in a spirit of partnership with others to combat poverty, stressing the need for the international community to fulfil its commitments

in financing for development. Regional and subregional measures should include strengthened international cooperation and innovative forms of partnership for development financing. National poverty reduction and sustained economic growth could be reinforced effectively through the legal empowerment of the poor, both at work and within the community. General Assembly resolution 63/142 on the legal empowerment of the poor, which his Government supported, would require political leadership and commitment from Governments and other stakeholders.

8. **Mr. Shin** Boonam (Republic of Korea) expressed concern that the global economic crisis had left the developing world more vulnerable, disproportionately affecting women and other at-risk populations. The international community must fight the urge to decrease aid because of limited resources. The Republic of Korea was doing its utmost to honour its commitment through a threefold increase in its official development assistance (ODA), which would reach approximately $3 billion in 2015. It would also be scaling up its regional focus for Africa and Asia, with plans to double aid to Asia by 2015 and embark on the second stage of an initiative for African development in November 2009. The Republic of Korea had long focused on rural development as part of its development cooperation programmes to combat poverty, and was supporting the Millennium Villages project, currently operating in 80 villages in 10 African countries.

9. His Government had established a quota system to ensure increased participation of women in politics at the national and local levels. It encouraged others to take similar steps, as progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment was key to reducing global poverty. Advances made by United Nations entities could be further enhanced by assisting countries with gender-responsive budgeting and fostering dialogue on mainstreaming to improve gender equality. While legal empowerment of the poor was important, the Committee's discussions on that matter and the relevant draft resolution shortly to be introduced should remain focused on development.

10. **Mr. Myint** (Myanmar) said that, without assistance from others or the existence of a social safety net, the lives of the poor remained hopeless. In the current financial and economic crisis, international cooperation for development was more vital than ever and the United Nations needed to mobilize the support of all the relevant entities at the regional and global levels to help developing countries eradicate poverty. Existing mechanisms for poverty reduction should be used and new ones developed. A substantial increase in assistance was needed to help Governments fulfil their commitment to halve poverty by 2015, and Governments, civil society and regional and international organizations needed to make sustained and concerted efforts to improve people's lives.

11. While the Government of Myanmar was making every effort to eradicate poverty, it had not received any assistance from international organizations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or the Asian Development Bank since 1988. Adding to that strain were the unjust and immoral unilateral sanctions being imposed on Myanmar by certain Western countries, drastically hampering its national development plans. Thousands of people across Myanmar had lost their jobs and were suffering.

12. Myanmar's efforts towards economic growth and job creation had included measures to expand agricultural production and to encourage private entrepreneurs to reclaim vacant and fallow land as well as virgin and wet land for cultivation, thus significantly increasing food production. It also encouraged private sector job creation, which had led to increased investment by both local and foreign investors, and had established a number of industrial zones around the country, generating new jobs for youths aged 18-24. At the regional level, Myanmar was cooperating with other members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in efforts towards rural development and poverty eradication.

13. **Mr. Loulichki** (Morocco) said that attaining the MDGs required the unfailing and collective efforts of the international community, which must implement all its development assistance commitments, including by devoting 0.7 per cent of GNP to ODA and 0.15 to 0.20 per cent to least developed countries. Food security was crucial to enable developing countries, especially those suffering from extreme poverty, to take ownership of the development process and fight against poverty. That goal could be met only through increased investment and ODA for agriculture. Climate change placed an additional strain on poor countries, endangering the lives of millions and plunging millions more into extreme poverty.

14. The outcome of the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference must respond to the interests of the countries that were the most affected by that scourge, as a matter of survival and political stability. Moreover, as women were the first to be affected by extreme poverty and crises in the world, the international community must continue in its efforts to improve response to their needs in terms of autonomy and strengthening their participation in the development process.

15. Morocco's commitment to the internationally agreed development goals was illustrated by its achievement in 2007 of the MDG targets for combating poverty and hunger and by the national initiative for human development, which, in addition to its goals of reducing poverty and social exclusion, also aimed to help the target population to take its future into its own hands by focusing on stable income-generating activities, access to basic social services and strengthening women's rights. Morocco had a compulsory health insurance scheme and a medical assistance scheme to help the poor.

16. His Government had also launched major reforms of the legal framework and public policies for gender equality in the social, economic and political spheres. Its law on microcredit had benefited more than an estimated million persons, of whom more than half were women. Women's political representation had also significantly improved, in parliament and in Government, as seven women held important strategic portfolios, and recent communal elections had also seen an increase in women's participation. Moreover, a number of laws had been amended to enhance women's equality with men and to protect women's and children's rights, with a new provision in the Family Code guaranteeing shared responsibility of spouses. Gender was mainstreamed in the State's general budget, with a view to stepping up the fight against gender inequalities and ensuring improved distribution of resources in social sectors for women and children.

17. Morocco was also strongly committed to the sustainable development of Africa, as evidenced through its organization in 2007 of a first African conference on human development. A global approach based on sustained international solidarity and the necessary political will was needed to adequately resolve the poverty issue.

18. **Mr. Koterec** (Slovakia) said that global macroeconomic cooperation was crucial to offset the impact of the global economic and financial crises and to create conditions conducive to renewed and sustained growth. While all countries bore the main responsibility for their own development, developed countries must play a greater role in tackling global challenges and must not lose sight of the MDGs, in spite of the current difficult times. Slovakia's commitment to fulfilling its MDG obligations was evident through the ODA it was providing under a number of bilateral and multilateral programmes and projects in the Western Balkans, Eastern Europe, Africa and Asia, and through its inclusion of ODA as a priority of Slovak foreign policy. Securing sustainable growth in developing countries required the international community to focus on the most vulnerable groups, women and children in particular, who would continue to suffer disproportionately from poverty unless women were liberated, empowered, educated and enabled to make full use of their economic potential. Women played an unprecedented role in the development process and development assistance for women was thus important. Slovakia recognized the need to improve gender equality and empower women in that regard, and supported the establishment of a gender entity within the United Nations system, as that would enhance the accountability and effectiveness of the Organization's work.

19. **Mr. Kuymizakis** (Malta) said that any position taken or recommendations made regarding women's empowerment and gender equality in relation to sexual reproductive health and rights should not create any obligation for any party to consider abortion as a legitimate form of reproductive health rights or services, and that any discussion of rights and services or commodities in connection with reproductive health must be held within the framework of the right to life, one of the most fundamental of human rights. Malta's legislation considered the termination of pregnancy through procedures of induced abortion as illegal and did not recognize abortion as a family planning measure. While his Government supported programmes and instruments such as the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, he reiterated his Government's reservations on terms such as

"reproductive rights", "reproductive services" or "control of fertility".

20. Gender equality was central to Malta's development policy and considered to be essential to reducing poverty. Furthermore, gender mainstreaming, a national priority, guided its development assistance and cooperation activities and was a cross-cutting issue in all areas of development policy. His Government had taken various measures to integrate a gender perspective into its development strategies, and gender mainstreaming had been strengthened within the national agenda to ensure equal opportunities in the design, application, analysis and monitoring of all laws, policies and programmes. Malta was promoting the active inclusion of women and men living in poverty and enhancing equal opportunities by boosting the overall employment rate, particularly through the inclusion of older workers, women and vulnerable groups within the labour market. It was also promoting greater availability of adequate and affordable housing and measures to prevent poverty and social exclusion from being perpetuated from generation to generation. It provided childcare services and promoted family-friendly measures to promote equitable participation of women and men in the labour market. Malta's national commission for the promotion of equality had carried out a study on gender-responsive budgeting in several countries with a view to enhancing Malta's national capacity-building and replicating certain initiatives. Member States should conduct similar studies and exchange best practices.

21. **Mr. Jafarov** (Azerbaijan) said that Azerbaijan had been able to mitigate the negative impact of the global financial and economic crisis on its economy and had achieved sustained economic stability, with current GDP growth of nearly 4 per cent. The successful launching and implementation of several regional infrastructure projects had boosted its economy and significantly contributed to the development of some of its neighbouring countries. His country had been affected by the current global economic, financial, food and energy crises and the ongoing armed conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, which had left one fifth of Azerbaijan's territory under occupation and made one out of every eight persons in the country an internally displaced person or refugee.

22. Nevertheless, with a view to attaining the MDGs by 2015, his Government had implemented a number of steps to eradicate poverty: it promoted measures to strengthen social and economic welfare; it encouraged a stronger private sector, was increasing economic opportunities and improving the quality of jobs; it was providing equal access to social protection and social services; and had reduced the unemployment rate. The social welfare and protection needs of vulnerable groups — older persons and persons with disabilities in particular — were taken into account in major national policies such as its national employment strategy.

23. With respect to legal empowerment, the creation of a proper legal framework for equal and reasonable access to justice, education, health and social protection must be accompanied by effective mechanisms to secure access to justice. It was also important to improve the quality of medical services and education, which should be affordable and available for all. Obstacles hindering business opportunities and access to markets, financial institutions, credits and loans, should be lifted, primarily through the protection and promotion of labour rights and rights to self-employment; it was a source of serious concern that 600 million people worked for less than $1.25 a day, according to the International Labour Organization (ILO). While each country must take primary responsibility for its own development and ensure that national efforts were harmonized with supportive global programmes, measures and policies, the United Nations and its specialized agencies should be the major universal framework for addressing social development issues, particularly those related to poverty alleviation. The second Decade for the Eradication of Poverty had a primary role to play in that regard.

24. **Mr. Taguri** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that, despite international efforts, the marginalizing effects of poverty continued to be felt around the world, and nowhere more than in sub-Saharan Africa. More resources needed to be allocated to unconditional food aid and national capacity-building. As the Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty got under way, the United Nations had an important role to play in mobilizing the collective political will to provide for the most vulnerable groups in the face of ODA reductions brought about by the recent financial crisis. National poverty reduction plans needed to include strategies to combat unemployment, the brain drain and HIV/AIDS, all of which took a heavy toll on the human resources that were crucial to sustainable

development. Early response by the international community to natural disasters was also essential for the developing and least developed countries.

25. His country had launched the "Green Campaign" to harness technology for land reclamation in the Community of Sahelo-Saharan States and throughout Africa and, along with Nigeria and Cuba, had financed a South-South health-care programme for several African countries. It supported African Union policies to promote continental integration through joint investment, financed institutions that provided business loans in Sahelo-Saharan States, and encouraged its own citizens to increase their private investments in Africa.

26. **Mr. Lakhal** (Tunisia) said that, because of the multidimensional nature of its causes and effects, poverty had to be placed in a global context and addressed in an integrated manner. Poverty was not inevitable but was the result of uneven and unevenly paced economic development. A true global partnership based on solidarity and cooperation was thus needed to promote development and help eliminate poverty. In that respect, International Human Solidarity Day, the second Decade for the Eradication of Poverty and the establishment of the World Solidarity Fund, pursuant to the initiative of Tunisia, were important. Steps must be taken to make the Fund operational as soon as possible.

27. His Government had undertaken far-reaching reforms to accelerate economic growth and reduce poverty, reforms that had allowed the emergence of a broad middle class and a balanced society which showed solidarity. Measures were also taken to strengthen social protection programmes, such as through the establishment of a minimum wage, and the collection of funds from public or private institutions for vulnerable groups. Those programmes and mechanisms had helped integrate more vulnerable groups into the production circuit, through encouraging youths, job seekers and persons with low incomes to create projects, and had helped make progress towards social coverage for all, and towards the continuous improvement of basic wages. Work still remained to be done in that area, however, and his Government also had plans to guarantee at least one source of income for each Tunisian family within the next five years.

28. **Mr. Aguiar Patriota** (Brazil) said that poverty eradication was a moral imperative and an essential element of the right to development. The international community had taken important steps towards developing a holistic framework to better understand and address the challenges it faced, and it was now time to focus on implementation. In that regard, strategies for economic growth must be pursued in tandem with public policies to help the poor overcome their day-to-day hurdles to prosperity. To mitigate the adverse effects of the financial and economic crisis, allow developing countries to deploy counter-cyclical policies and to finance social protection measures, the international community must provide substantial new and additional resources to developing countries, the most vulnerable ones in particular. Innovative sources of financing for development should be further explored within the United Nations development structure, but should never be regarded as a substitute for shortfalls in ODA. The High-level Event on the Millennium Development Goals scheduled for 2010 must address such issues and Member States must reaffirm their support for the goals set out in the Millennium Declaration, be represented at the meeting by heads of State or of Government and bring new proposals for multilateral actions against poverty and hunger.

29. His delegation believed in full enjoyment of the legal system and access to justice by the poor and would be co-sponsoring the draft resolution on the legal empowerment of the poor and the eradication of poverty. Brazil had taken a number of measures to combat poverty. Its "Zero Hunger" programme in particular had had a huge impact. The promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women were also key priorities of the Brazilian Government, as reflected in a monthly family stipend programme for families living below a minimum level of income, in exchange for their children's school enrolment, medical screening and vaccination. In 2009, that programme had helped almost 30 per cent of the population, with 70 per cent of the cash transferred being spent on food, and 90 per cent of the Government outlays through the programme had benefited the poorest 40 per cent of the population. The programme also recognized the critical role women played in overcoming poverty and exclusion, with women being the main recipients of funds under the programme.

30. **Mr. Osuntokun** (Nigeria) said that development benchmarks included the ability to provide the general population with basic necessities such as education, food, shelter, good health services and gainful

employment. In that context, food security must be achieved, and the root causes of food shortages must be addressed through strategic and coordinated programmes.

31. Africa was very dependent on agriculture for food consumption and export, and Africans' destiny was therefore tied to prospects in that sector. The recent convergence of crises had weakened the improved capacities previously attained. Nigeria had immense potential for high agricultural productivity, but its agricultural sector suffered from a low level of mechanization, an inadequate support infrastructure, insufficient capital and a lack of focused investment. However, the federal Government had promoted growth, lending to farmers to boost large-scale commercial agriculture, inter alia. Nigeria would welcome bilateral partnerships to invest in agriculture, improve the road and rail systems and develop and diversify sources of new and renewable energy.

32. Successful implementation of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme provided the most effective framework for addressing the problem of hunger and poverty on the continent in the short and long term. Africa's efforts to achieve an African green revolution as soon as possible should be supported.

33. Another issue affecting prosperity was health. The devastating effect of a disease pandemic had dissipated Africa's human resource capacity. Partnerships and strategies had been required to combat AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria.

34. Poverty alleviation strategies included microcredit and microfinancing programmes and other grass-roots initiatives. One programme created incentives, making keeping one's children in school a prerequisite for accessing free health services.

35. All poverty alleviation strategies must take into account the fact that women were crucial to the health and sustainability of society. Women, who remained deprived in all societies, must be equipped and empowered to enable them to make a valuable contribution to the health of the family and the nation. Measures must be taken to enhance access by women to participation and decision-making on all political, economic and social issues.

36. **Mr. Dall'Oglio** (International Organization for Migration) said that the economic and social behaviour of international migrants must be included in any discussion of poverty reduction. There were some 212 million international migrants worldwide, and they had remitted an estimated 305 billion dollars in 2008. Taken together, the annual remittances of international migrants were greater than the GDP of many developed countries. While migrants represented a mere 3 per cent of the world's population, their remittances were nearly two thirds the amount of foreign direct investment in developing countries.

37. In times of economic downturn, however, when the positive contributions of migrants were called into question, it was important to stress that migration challenges required responsible policy decisions that best served host and home countries and the migrants themselves. In that context, the issuance by the United Nations Development Programme of its Human Development Report 2009, entitled *Overcoming barriers: Human mobility and development*, was particularly timely.

38. Migration should be integrated into national development plans and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers. Internal migration, which involved almost four times more people and larger sums of money than international migration, had received little attention. Recently there had been greater success in developing policies for using migration as a stimulus for development rather than focusing on its negative consequences. A handbook on mainstreaming migration into poverty reduction was being prepared by several United Nations agencies, to be presented in November. It would be supplemented by a training programme.

39. **Archbishop Migliore** (Holy See) noted that recovery from the economic crisis would be very slow. Some monitoring and advisory agencies had announced that the unemployment rate in industrialized countries had increased over the past 12 months to levels comparable to those of the 1930s, and malnutrition rates had increased by 11 per cent. Even if recovery was imminent, the crisis would continue for those who remained jobless. In that context, it was important to work towards a qualitative change in the management of international financial affairs.

40. Regarding the accelerating decline in ODA, all available funds were apparently being used to prevent further financial collapse. However, ODA commitments were far smaller than the amounts allocated to restore the financial sector. International commitments must be

implemented without delay or excuses. The sale of a portion of the gold reserves of the international financial institutions to help the poorest and most indebted countries, as well as the commitment to support poor countries made during the 2005 Group of Eight (G-8) Summit in Gleneagles and the March 2009 Group of Twenty (G-20) Summit in London should be implemented urgently. The commitments made at the World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen in 1995 and the ILO focus on decent work were essential for a balanced recovery.

41. In an economic system that served the interests of the poor, they must be able to defend their own rights in the context of the rule of law. In addition, the poor must have greater access to education, which should go beyond basic education or professional training.

42. **Mr. Kennedy** (United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)), speaking on item 57 (b), said that UNIDO had been providing support for women's entrepreneurship for many years and recognized the value to the individual, families, children and society at large brought by women's efforts in the productive sectors. In that connection, UNIDO was pleased to participate in organizing the Vienna launch of the 2009 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development and in hosting the joint biennial workshop of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development/Development Assistance Committee and the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality. The former event, set for late October, would publicize and explain the Survey and would include presentations by a panel of experts involved in the preparation of the report. The second event, to be held in February 2010, aimed to explore the gender equality and women's empowerment aspects of strengthening country ownership over development. Presentations at the workshop would focus on the creation of economic opportunities for women, improving women's access to property and ensuring their participation in economic decision-making.

43. **Ms. Barth** (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that, since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 63/230 on the Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008-2017), ILO had actively engaged with United Nations system partners to ensure policy coherence and the building of system-wide synergies around the theme of full employment and decent work for all.

44. Poverty eradication efforts should be focused on the most vulnerable members of society, including women. Women were often at a disadvantage in labour markets. There was a need for a strong gender perspective in development strategies.

45. Employment recovery often lagged behind economic recovery by four to five years. ILO had concentrated on reducing the lag through participation in the global social protection floor and the adoption of the Global Jobs Pact. The Second Decade system-wide plan of action gave impetus to a productive development agenda which could assist in speeding up employment recovery.

46. There was a widespread rights gap which must be addressed if poverty was to be tackled. The rights gap forced many people into poverty through denial of their most fundamental rights. Poverty was made worse by social protection gaps, which meant that old age, sickness and other eventualities could push vulnerable persons back into poverty. There was also the social dialogue gap, which prevented those in such jobs as subsistence farming and domestic and migrant work from making their voices heard. Employment was the key for creating wealth and distributing it equitably. It was the main route out of poverty. Countries which had succeeded in reducing poverty had had not only economic growth strategies but also employment growth strategies.

47. **Mr. Karageorgiades** (Observer for the Order of Malta) said that the eradication of poverty had been his organization's mission for 900 years. The Order was always there to serve the poor and disinherited. It functioned in over 120 countries and had diplomatic relations with 100 States, the United Nations and the European Union. It had 12,500 members, 80,000 staff volunteers and paid highly qualified medical and paramedical staff.

48. The Order had effective pilot projects in developing countries, including entrepreneurial training for 99 poor women in a province of Viet Nam, a project to fight malnutrition in children in Uganda and a project in Romania providing medicines, clothing, meal deliveries and other services for the disabled and the elderly. The Order had been granted permanent observer status 15 years earlier by the General Assembly. It followed General Assembly initiatives closely and was always ready to improve its own activities to promote development.

49. **Ms. Semasinghe** (Sri Lanka) said that over an additional 50 million people had already been condemned to extreme poverty in connection with the financial crisis and recession; that number could increase to 90 million. Therefore it would be difficult for many countries to meet Millennium Development Goal 1, the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger. However, the renewed commitment to development assistance was cause for optimism.

50. Sri Lanka was mobilizing financial resources to fund microcredit and microfinance projects to empower the rural poor and address gender-based income discrepancies as well as those between rural and urban residents. The poverty headcount ratio had declined from 22.7 per cent to 14 per cent in 2008. Unemployment had remained in the single digits since 2000 and had been gradually declining since 2005; the latest data, for the third quarter of 2008, indicated a historically low rate of 5 per cent.

51. Sri Lanka was on track to attain the Millennium Development Goals related to education and health. There had been a 98 per cent success rate in universal primary school enrolment and completion. Gender parity in primary and secondary school enrolment was impressive and infant and under-five mortality rates had decreased. The 10-year pro-poor development policy framework focused on the delivery of sustainable and poverty-focused financial services, including loans to micro- and small enterprises as well as to poor households.

52. The Central Bank of Sri Lanka had implemented poverty alleviation microfinance projects, concentrated in rural areas. Financial services were widely accessed, with 82.55 per cent of households benefiting from such services from financial institutions. The Central Bank also coordinated several donor-funded credit lines with microfinance components. In that connection, assistance from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) was appreciated, as was assistance from the Japanese International Cooperation Agency, which would be applied to microfinance projects in the recently liberated Northern and Eastern Provinces. As in many other parts of the world, microfinance in Sri Lanka served a predominantly female clientele.

53. The gender perspective had been embedded in the country's overall policy framework. The World Economic Forum Gender Gap Report 2008 ranked Sri Lanka twelfth among over 160 countries. Women constituted a majority of the workforce in the key foreign exchange-generating sectors of the economy, including the apparel industry, external remittances and the tea industry. A holistic, gender-responsive programme had been initiated to address issues related to employment and social and mental well-being and to help rural women to realize their full potential.

54. The proportion of females was 99 per cent in primary education, 106 per cent in secondary education and 187 per cent in tertiary education. The ratio of literate women to men in the 15-24 age category in 2006 had been 101.8 per cent, and the share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector testified to high gender equality and high female participation in economic activity. The health-care sector was enhancing the productivity of the labour force. Sri Lanka attained ambitious health-care goals, even in the absence of health insurance schemes, through the allocation of a small share of tax revenue for public health-care expenditures.

55. Despite a protracted struggle against terrorism and the devastating tsunami of December 2004, Sri Lanka had maintained momentum in achieving development goals, including the MDGs. International partnerships were critical in supporting national efforts to achieve development goals. Donors were therefore encouraged to factor in the internationally agreed development goals when allocating resources for development assistance.

56. *Mr. García González (El Salvador), Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.*

Agenda item 60: Agriculture development and food security (A/64/221)

57. **Mr. Chaudhry** (Division for Sustainable Development, Department of Economic and Social Development), introducing the Secretary-General's report on agricultural development and food security (A/64/221), said that the report had benefited from valuable inputs from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), IFAD and the secretariat of the High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis. It also drew on the sixteenth and seventeenth sessions of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development pertaining to agriculture and rural development.

58. The 2008 price surge had been the result of several short-term factors. In addition, chronic

underinvestment since the 1980s had led to slow growth in the agricultural sector. The world economy was expected to shrink by 2.6 per cent during the current year, after expanding since 2004. While a mild recovery was expected in 2010, the global economy remained fragile. That would have an impact on food security.

59. In response to the food crisis, the United Nations Chief Executives Board for Coordination had established a High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis, which had issued the Comprehensive Framework for Action. The Framework outlined two areas for intervention: addressing the immediate needs of vulnerable populations and building resilience and contributing to food and nutrition security. The Task Force had provided support to national authorities in both areas, and had also provided longer-term support to improve production and improve resilience to price volatility and external shocks. Contributions had been made to capacity-building for small farmers, and unprecedented levels of food assistance had been provided for countries most affected by the price hike. The World Bank had disbursed 780 million dollars in one year under its global food crisis response programme. The secretariat of the Task Force was coordinating activities in 35 countries.

60. At the seventeenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, agreement had been reached on a multipronged strategy, including integrating the food security agenda into the broader framework of national sustainable development strategies and poverty reduction programmes, revitalizing agriculture in developing countries through a sustainable green revolution, providing social protection through social strategies that employed policy measures, including infrastructure investment, institutional development and capacity-building, and promoting international cooperation leading to resource mobilization, cooperation in research and development, strengthening policy coherence and access to international markets.

61. Food security and sustainable development remained high on the international political agenda. Governments, donors and development partners had undertaken new commitments to re-engage in the agricultural sector. The G-8 had agreed to commit more than 20 billion dollars to agriculture over the next three years. Prior to the food crisis, approaches to hunger and food insecurity had been fragmented. Attention had now been drawn to the problem.

62. **Ms. Osman** (Sudan), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, recalled that FAO had stated that there was enough food to feed double the world population. Thus the root causes of hunger and food insecurity must be carefully addressed. The number of people living in hunger had been increasing and the food crisis had exposed deep structural imbalances in the global economy, which had direct impacts on agriculture and food security.

63. A comprehensive approach must include increasing agriculture productivity, stimulating pre- and post-harvest interventions, ensuring adequate financial resources and emphasizing private sector growth and small-holders. Lasting political, economic, social, financial and technical solutions must be adopted. Therefore, any successful strategy to defeat hunger should involve stronger institutions with better accountability, global market stability, enhanced market access for agricultural products from developing countries, elimination of trade-distorting subsidies, sustainable investments in agricultural production and research and targeted support for the advancement of the agricultural sector in developing countries, including small-scale farmers and the poor. The international economic and trade policy pursued over the last 25 years had discouraged food production in developing countries, reoriented food consumption patterns in developing countries and provided advantage to the import of subsidized foods from developed countries, with a grave impact on local production capacities.

64. While it was urgently necessary to reverse the decline of the share of agriculture in total ODA, new and additional financial resources from all sources were needed to achieve sustainable agricultural development and food security in developing countries. Public-private investment and partnerships should be intensified. Trade was also key in achieving food security. International trade must enhance global food production and provide greater and fairer dividends for developing countries. A rules-based international trading system that was open, non-distorted and non-discriminatory could promote agriculture and contribute to food security.

65. The Group of 77 and China recognized the efforts by FAO, the World Food Programme and IFAD to

strengthen cooperation. The Secretary-General's Task Force had an important role to play as well. It was hoped that the World Summit on Food Security, to be held in November 2009, would find a meaningful solution to food security issues. Agricultural research work also played an important role.

66. **Mr. Kleib** (Indonesia), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that the global food and agriculture economy had changed greatly over the past 20 years. While more food commodities were being produced, food insecurity was increasing. There were more hungry people in the world than ever before, over 1 billion, and, ironically, many of them were involved in farming.

67. ASEAN believed that food security and agricultural policies must be mainstreamed into the development process at the national and international levels. There must be synergy between international development support for food security, sustainable development and development objectives. Sustained and predictable funding, appropriate technology transfer and increased targeted investment in agriculture, balanced with respect for the environment, were central.

68. Poor and small-holder farmers were the basis of rural communities in Asia and elsewhere. They had scarce resources and poor market access, and were themselves prone to hunger and malnutrition. They must receive better access to financing and agricultural inputs. Their agricultural production and household food security could be improved through organic, natural, sustainable and community-based approaches to farming. With greater productivity, small-holders could help resolve the food security problem.

69. Food security and social safety nets must be strengthened, and adequate buffer stocks for emergencies must be assured. The global financial system and trading of food in commodity exchanges must be better regulated. Food should not be treated as an investment instrument. Reform in agriculture trade must be expedited to give small farmers access to their own domestic markets. Finally, global governance for food security must be strengthened. The reform process under way in FAO and the Committee on World Food Security were of particular importance in that regard.

70. There were 646 million people living in hunger in the Asia-Pacific. ASEAN had implemented numerous cooperation projects in food and agriculture. ASEAN leaders had pledged to achieve food security through sustainable food production, marketing and trade in the region. ASEAN had agreed to support development of agriculture productivity through greater investment and was also strengthening cooperation on agricultural research and development, technology transfer, infrastructure improvements and development of food security early warning systems.

71. **Mr. Rai** (Nepal) said that agriculture was the largest employment sector and contributor to the economy for the least developed countries. However, the agricultural sector lacked irrigation, scientific tools, technology, seeds, fertilizer, investment and institutions. That had led to low productivity and hunger. Modern tools were needed to end the vicious cycle, but those tools must not undermine sustainability and time-tested indigenous knowledge.

72. In Africa, 70 per cent of full-time employment was in the agricultural sector, and 33 per cent of GDP and 40 per cent of export earnings were from the agricultural sector. To launch a green revolution, additional North-South and South-South partnerships were required. Agricultural subsidies which had created unequal conditions for the products of least developed countries were a source of concern. An early conclusion to the Doha Round establishing a non-distorted, non-discriminatory market was hoped for.

73. The international community was urged to reverse the trend of declining ODA in the agricultural sector. The recent commitment by the G-8 to invest 20 billion dollars in three years to encourage rural development in poor countries was noted. Increased international support to the least developed countries to feed the hungry was needed, as were long-term sustainable measures for agricultural development. The food crises necessitated appropriate national and international institutional capacities to govern food security. The United Nations High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis was appreciated, and more concrete action, including implementation of the framework it had adopted, was hoped for. The World Summit on Food Security to be held in Rome in November should pave the way for the creation of a global governing system and accountability mechanism for food security.

74. **Ms. Zalkaply** (Malaysia) said that the Secretary-General's report on agriculture development and food security should have addressed the fundamental problem of how best to balance competing interests between short-term and long-term commodities, between promoting the agricultural and the industrial sector and between increasing agricultural production and addressing climate change considerations.

75. In societies with periodic elections, there was always a tendency to favour short-term considerations, such as food subsidies. Such subsidies were generally inefficient over time. It would be more efficient to use resources devoted to subsidies to promote agriculture production using the latest technologies and techniques. However, many Governments had difficulty removing food subsidies because of the risk of social unrest and electoral defeat.

76. Most developing countries had invested massive capital to promote industrialization, and, as a result, the agricultural sector had been neglected. Thus, there had been massive social changes, including population transfer from rural to urban areas. To reverse the process by promoting agriculture now required financial resources not only for that purpose, but also to address the social transition costs arising from another reorganization of the economic structure.

77. The report envisaged developing countries as producers of raw commodities, as they had been in the past. It contained no reference to the need for developing countries to be involved in downstream activities.

78. The report should have addressed more vigorously the issue of speculation and financialization of commodity trading and its impact on commodity prices. The most recent Trade and Development Report by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) had devoted an entire chapter to the financialization of commodity markets, concluding that it had increased price changes unrelated to market fundamentals, that greater involvement of financial investors in commodity markets had increased price volatility and might have increased the impact of oil price movements on food prices.

79. The larger socio-economic impact of hunger must be kept in view. The Secretary-General's report stated that a total of 178 million children were stunted owing to chronic malnutrition and poor diet. Hunger led to lower levels of educational attainment, which would have lasting effects on future generations.

80. Malaysia had allocated 1 billion dollars to transform traditional farmers into modern farmers. Somewhat over half of that had been distributed. The Government had recently allocated 1 million dollars to provide modern equipment to growers free of charge. The measures had yielded results. The International Food Policy Research Institute had recently released a report that listed Malaysia as one of the countries with the greatest improvement in its Global Hunger Index.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.